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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3271
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 1739
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 5082
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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0256
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0019
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0326
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0717
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UNCLAS HANOI 002255

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND EB/TPP/BTA/ANA

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SUBJECT: VIETNAM: POSITIVE SHIFT TOWARD PEACE CORPS BUT ISSUES
REMAIN

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11. (SBU) Summary. Recent discussions with Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) indicate the Government of Vietnam's (GVN) stance towards the Peace Corps may be shifting in a positive direction and lead us to believe that an agreement to begin a program in Vietnam remains possible before President Bush's visit in November. MFA's Le Chi Dzung told Econoff that the MFA has now taken the lead in the project of bringing the Peace Corps to Vietnam, replacing the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). This is a positive sign, as MOET officials had been inflexible and did not have authority to discuss general matters such as future Peace Corps activities in health and the environment. Dzung also requested a copy of the PC country agreement with China. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In a series of discussions with Econoff August 30 - September 1, Le Chi Dzung of MFA's Americas Department emphasized that the GVN is very eager to work out the details of an agreement so that the Peace Corps program can be a deliverable for the President's visit. The MFA wants the announcement of a program to represent a new chapter in U.S.-Vietnamese relations, he said.

13. (SBU) According to Dzung, the GVN is carefully reviewing the details of several Peace Corps country agreements forwarded to the MFA by the Peace Corps in order to determine which GVN ministry or organization should be the country agreement signatory and to understand the terms by which a Peace Corps program would be established in Vietnam. The current possible GVN signatories are the MFA, the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO), MOET, or the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Dzung repeatedly brought up VUFO, the government agency to coordinate NGO activities.

13. (SBU) As in past discussions, Dzung requested a copy of the Peace Corp's China country agreement. Dzung emphasized that the MFA was eager to see a copy of this agreement, even if the Peace Corps could indicate which line items were unacceptable and could not be replicated. "Peace Corps has a history...and China is similar to us," he said. "We hope that the United States will be as transparent as possible on this issue."

14. (SBU) Econoff passed on the wish of the Peace Corps Thailand Country Director John Williams to visit Vietnam in early September to try and hammer out further details of an agreement, but Dzung -- while not refusing a visit -- said that Vietnam is not ready for a visit yet. He asked that the United States give the GVN time to

respond to the positions advanced during the assessment visit before planning a new trip. He stated that the GVN would have new information for the Peace Corps and asked that we wait until September 6 or 7.

15. (SBU) Comment: We welcome this confirmation that the GVN is focused on the Peace Corps issue. Its desire to see the China country agreement has become an issue of some importance. The GVN believes that the China agreement contained "concessions" made because of China's status as a communist country, perhaps including special provisions on espionage or religious and political activities. Post believes sharing this document could accelerate the process of reaching an agreement with the GVN.

MARINE